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Statement of Crissy Timpson

The first day when I met David Marmel I was in total shock. He introduced himself to me in the national office with Elaine Marmel, his wife and pageant co-founder, the Mrs. America Contestant Coordinator and the Mrs. America videographer. We went to the office and Elaine and Mrs. America Contestant Coordinator greeted me. A few minutes later David walked in and introduced himself to me. David sat down at the table and said that he didn't believe I was from New Jersey and asking what part so I responded and laughed and he said that he didn't believe me. The conversation continued and he asked about my husband and what he does. I told him my husband is in the military so he asked me what branch and I told him the Air Force. He went on to tell me how he had served. I thought that was the end of the conversation, but then he said, and I quote, "the asshole who kneels needs to stop disrespecting my flag".

I know my face looked shocked because I wasn't expecting that and I thought David understood why Colin Kaepernick knelt. I guess I was being a little naïve because I was still on cloud 9 from actually being in Vegas for the Mrs. America pageant. David then went on to say if "you people want to protest do it at a police station not at a football game".

I gathered my thoughts because I was trying to stay calm. I told David that he missed the point of the true meaning of kneeling and it wasn't because Kaepernick wanted to disrespect the American flag, it was because of police brutality. I then told him that I am a police brutality survivor. I had called 911 and then was attacked by the police. I told this man that my whole family has served or is currently serving in the military and not one time did we feel that it was disrespectful that he knelt down.

David changed the subject and said “well you people need to stop killing each other, we need people to bring up the black community. He told me he understands because he was the director of the first African American achievement awards. He told me that “you black women need to stop having babies and having 4 baby daddies, your men are drug dealers, incarcerated, in jail, you are on welfare, and killing each other”. He then pointed out about that fact that the most racist people he came into contact with were the editors at Ebony and Jet Magazine. He lifted up his sleeve to show me his tanned skin color and told me that the Editors of the magazines called him brother and how they would call each other “niggers” and it was OK to say it because they called him brother. I feel that it is never ok to say that!

At this point I looked around and Elaine, and the Mrs. America Contestant Coordinator were silent and Mrs. America Videographer was shaking his head nodding in agreement. David then talked about his career as a baseball player and how it’s not the 60’s anymore and there are no government agencies to help you people. I didn’t understand what he was implying after that statement. He then said he remembered the water fountain saying and I quote “no niggers, no Jews” and that he understands my community and we should be thankful he put on the award show.

Then he talked about his hero and how at 16 he didn’t have food and he had to take care of his siblings and how instead of going to the streets he finished school and how today he is his best friend and attorney. He told me if he could overcome that there’s no excuse for other black people. I couldn’t believe what I was hearing. David then said this is one of his best years because there were so many black women in his pageant this year.

David pulled me aside and told me to let the other black women know what he has done for us and our community. Finally I checked in with the VIP desk. I sat with Mrs. America videographer and he told me that he thought David liked me and I didn’t know what to say. The Mrs. America Videographer felt the same way as David about kneeling and the black community. I went up to my room to call my husband and mom and told them everything and then let it go. I knew no one would believe my encounter.

Then Elvis dinner finally came and I was having a beautiful time when I noticed that Mrs. Delaware, another state winner, Mrs. Missouri and Mrs. Ohio were sitting with David. David saw me come over but I was sitting directly behind him and so was Jeri (Mrs. Ohio) just towards the left side. I don't think he even noticed she was there. She was on her phone at the time.

I knew something was going to happen, so as I sat there, I thought to myself, please don't say the offensive and racist things you said to me to all of them. He then began. He said ladies this isn't the 60's anymore there aren't government agencies to help you people. He said and I quote "you black women need to stop having babies, 4 baby daddies, your men are drug dealers and incarcerated and in jail. You people are on welfare there's so much black on black crime". After that another state winner told me to come sit next to her and I told her I'm good. David then turned around and told me "no Jersey, come sit over here where I can see you. I know we discussed this on the first day." I got up and sat next to the winner who had asked me to sit next to her..

David went on to say again that he made the African American achievement awards and we should be thankful for what he has done for the black community. He talked about the "ass-hole" who knelt and disrespected his flag then said how the most racist people he ever met were the "niggers" at Ebony and Jet magazines. He rolled up his sleeve and took Mrs. Missouri's arm and said since we are family it's ok to say that because they call me brother. He then said again ladies this isn't the 60's anymore and talked about his career in baseball and at the water fountain that read "no niggers, no Jews". He then said that he's already had one black Mrs. America and at this time Delaware said wow and he turned to her and said well it's the truth I've already had one. At the moment each one of us couldn't believe what happened. Jeri got up out her seat and sat on the table and I saw the tears filling her eyes. She couldn't believe what he just said. The rest of us were numb because even though for some this was the first encounter with him, this personally was my second. I was thankful it happened. I was thankful because I had other women who experienced what happened to me on day 1.

As I started to share my experience with the ladies Rhonda came over and told us to pose for a photo, and that photo we will never forget. I was tired and mentally and emotionally exhausted I was distraught in my room crying to my husband packing up my things and my roommate tried to console me. I felt like I was trapped. I was thankful that Jeri was there but we all felt if anyone would say anything we would get in trouble. I couldn't contact my director because her husband was ill and in the hospital. The other ladies did tell their directors and even now before I came forward their directors don't believe them. My director doesn't seem to believe me even after I got in contact with her.

She told me she has had black queens before and they never said anything. I told her, her past queen reached out to me and told me her story and how she felt like she couldn't say anything. We paid thousands of dollars. Our families were flying in. I felt that if we said anything about the shocking comments made to us that we couldn't be on the Mrs. America stage that we worked so hard to finally get to so we all stayed quiet.

We put it in the back of our heads and let it go so we could still go on stage. Originally we weren't going to say anything because again we all thought who would believe us. If we came forward after the pageant, people would think we were just upset about either not winning or placing the way we wanted.

Later, David accused us of lying. He denied everything and said it didn't happen. He said we were trying to ruin him and he said all he did was try to connect with us, but it did happen and we all decided as a group we will not be told not to talk about this anymore and be made to look like we made this up or are upset over a pageant. As soon as others heard about it I had women (past queens) reach out because they knew what happened to me and us. They told me their experiences and what they felt was conduct that discriminated against them and how they stayed quiet. The women told me how proud they were because we decided to finally say what they wish they could've said when they competed.

Crissy Timpson
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